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AUTHOR Lacina-Gifford, Lorna J.; Kher, Neelam; Besant, Kyesha
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ABSTRACT

This study identified preservice teachers' knowledge about effective and ineffective classroom management strategies. A group of 108 preservice teachers at a southern rural public university generated classroom management strategies in response to hypothetical vignettes depicting shy and withdrawn student behavior. Researchers coded the extended responses to identify strategies the preservice teachers would and would not use to manage students' shy and withdrawn behavior in the classroom. Data analysis indicated that preservice teachers, in response to shy or withdrawn behavior, tended to offer strategies that were similar to those identified in previous research. They preferred teachers who treated students with respect, avoided sarcasm, used direct instruction, and did not make students feel stupid. Students reported preferring to use such strategies as talking with the shy student, involving the whole class in helping this student, and rearranging the classroom to facilitate interaction between shy students and other classmates. Strategies they considered ineffective included confronting the student in front of the class, embarrassing the student, and using punishment. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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Preservice Teachers' Knowledge of Effective Classroom Management Strategies: Shy or Withdrawn Students

Lorna J. Lacina-Gifford

Neelam Kher, and Kyesha Besant

Northwestern State University (LA)

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Abstract

The present study is part of a systematic program evaluation effort. Preservice teachers at a southern rural public university were asked to generate classroom management strategies in response to hypothetical vignettes depicting shy and withdrawn behavior. The extended responses were coded to identify strategies the preservice teachers would and would not use to manage students' shy and withdrawn behavior in the classroom. A majority of preservice teachers' responses focused on talking individually with shy and withdrawn students. Strategies considered ineffective included confronting the student in front of the class and embarrassing the student. Our data seem to suggest that preservice teachers may not have yet developed a well-articulated system for dealing with problem students.

Preservice Teachers' Knowledge of Effective Classroom Management Strategies: Shy or Withdrawn Students

Perspective

Undergraduate teacher preparation programs typically address the topic of classroom management as a small part of Educational Psychology or peripherally as part of discipline techniques in Child Development courses. As students enter their student teaching experience, they often arrive in the classroom with brief coverage of a variety of different approaches to classroom management and a limited exposure to diverse populations and field experiences. Many students enter teacher preparation programs, "not merely lacking knowledge about effective classroom management but also harboring mistaken attitudes and beliefs (misconceptions) that are likely to persist unless directly confronted and refuted" (Brophy, 1987, p. 28). Accreditation agencies are thus calling for teacher assistance in working with diverse populations in more field-based settings (NCATE, 2000). According to Ryan and Cooper (2001), classroom management requires "a thorough understanding of theoretical knowledge and research findings, as well as practical experience" (p. 201).

Thus, the present study was initiated in response to feedback received from graduates of our undergraduate teacher preparation program at the university. Systematic program evaluation efforts by our College of Education revealed that student teachers and beginning teachers feel least prepared and confident in dealing with issues related to classroom management. Feedback from local school districts and other concerned citizenry also indicated that teachers felt inadequately prepared to cope with problem students who frustrated teachers' attempts to teach.

Accrediting bodies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

(NCATE) have increased their emphasis on teacher performance on the job as an indicator of successful student outcomes. The Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education of Louisiana in response to the push for teacher accountability established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality in April of 1999. The purpose of the Blue Ribbon Commission is improving teacher quality in Louisiana. "It was given the charge to recommend policies to the Governor, Board of Regents, and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that would lead to a cohesive PK-16+ system to hold universities and school districts accountable for the aggressive recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of quality teachers who produced higher achieving K-12 students" (Blue, 1999). Universities in Louisiana are in the process of redesigning the teacher preparation curriculum to ensure that beginning teachers, when they enter the teaching profession are competent in all aspects of classroom teaching. The climate of curriculum reform makes the present research particularly germane.

Objectives

The present study was developed to identify preservice teachers' knowledge about effective and ineffective classroom management strategies. A prerequisite to developing a coherent curriculum that addresses issues related to classroom management is the identification of preservice teachers' knowledge about classroom management.

Method and Data Source

Student teachers of the undergraduate teacher preparation program at a southern rural public university were asked to generate classroom management strategies in response to hypothetical problems that occurred in the classroom. Data in the form of extended written responses were obtained from student teachers at the end of their student teaching experience in

the fall and spring semesters. The teacher preparation program at this university is tightly sequenced with each education course serving as a prerequisite for the following course. Students first enroll in Foundations of Education followed by Educational Psychology, Child Development, Instructional Design, Methods, and finally Student Teaching.

At the end of the fall and spring semesters, student teachers that represented the entire graduating class were given a written assignment in a group setting. Of the 120 responses, 108 were considered usable. The sample included 84 females and 24 males. More than 90% of the respondents were Caucasian. A majority of the respondents were seeking elementary certification.

The students were to discuss strategies they would use in dealing with two hypothetical vignettes depicting shy and withdrawn behavior and also discuss specific strategies that may not work (see Appendix A). Shy and withdrawn children are perceived as those who "avoid personal interaction, are quiet and unobtrusive, and do not respond well to others" (Brophy & McCaslin, 1992, p. 63). These were a subset of the vignettes used by Brophy and McCaslin. The vignettes were attached to the cover sheet in a randomized order.

The researchers collected students' completed responses. A research assistant trained in the coding system coded the extended responses. The research assistant trained on a subset of the responses to achieve an 80% exact agreement with responses independently coded by one of the investigators. The coding system incorporated a subset of the categories represented in the universal coding system for vignettes (Brophy & McCaslin, 1992).

Results

In responding to the scenarios about Linda who is extremely shy and withdrawn and John who is immersed in daydreams, more than 66% of the preservice teachers responded that they

would talk to the student. About one-third of the respondents indicated that they would involve the whole class in helping the problem students. About 25% of the student teachers responded that they would rearrange the classroom to facilitate interaction between the shy students and other classmates and they would also monitor the shy students closely.

Among the strategies that were considered ineffective with this type of problem student, the most frequently cited were confronting the student in front of the class (65%) and embarrassing the student (40%). Punitive strategies, yelling or screaming at the student or lecturing to the shy students were also identified as ineffective strategies. Given the pattern of demographics the researchers decided not to break down the responses by gender or ethnicity.

Discussion and Educational Importance

According to Brophy's (1995) survey of effective teachers to find out how they would respond to shy students, the most commonly mentioned responses included (1) minimizing stress or embarrassment, (2) engaging shy students in special activities, (3) changing the social environment like seating them among friendly classmates, (4) encouraging or shaping increased responsiveness, and (5) involving them in frequent private talks. These teachers' responses excluded an emphasis on threat or punishment. Thus strategies focusing on the socialization of students seem to predominate.

The results of this study indicate that preservice teachers, in response to shy or withdrawn behavior, seem to offer strategies that are similar to those identified by Brophy (1995) based on his study of effective teachers. Students prefer teachers who treat them with respect, avoid sarcasm, use direct instruction, and do not make them feel stupid (Bergin & Walworth, 1999). Brophy and Alleman (1998) pointed out "that most successful classroom teachers focus on

establishing effective learning environments rather then functioning primarily as disciplinarians" (p. 57). Students who are consistently treated with respect are more likely to develop positive socialization roles than those treated with disrespect (Brophy, 1998).

Suggested strategies for working with shy or withdrawn students based on two decades of research (Brophy, 1996b) include checking with shy students frequently if they are prone to daydream; providing training in assertiveness; giving shy students information needed to develop social insight; providing shy students with a designated role to help them interact with others in social situations; and making time to talk with them each day.

> These strategies include providing self-concept support, encouragement, and opportunities to develop confidence and comfort in the classroom to shy and inhibited students, as well as closer monitoring, improved nonverbal communication, environmental engineering, and instructive suggestions or demands for improved concentration designed to maintain the attention of students prone to withdrawal or daydreaming. (Brophy, p. 3)

Brophy goes on to state that even though most teachers have an intuitive understanding of the needs of shy and withdrawn students, others could benefit by systematically applying these principles and strategies.

Our data seem to suggest that preservice teachers may be on the right track when it comes to dealing with shy and withdrawn students. However, their responses indicate that their management system is still evolving and they may not have developed a well-articulated system for dealing with problem students and thus may not employ strategies that were systematic enough to produce enduring effects. "Good classroom management implies more than eliciting student cooperation in maintaining order" (Brophy & Alleman, 1998, p. 56). As Brophy (1996a)

aptly suggests that as teachers develop "their role as facilitators of students' socialization into the learning environment, teachers can create the potential for having a significant impact on the lives of problem students" (p. 3).

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Appendix A

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Directions: Given on the following page are two descriptions of problem students that teachers often identify as time consuming, frustrating, and/or worrisome to teach. For each problem student described, discuss in as much detail as possible:

a. Specific strategies you would use in dealing with this type of student.

b. Specific strategies that may NOT work with this type of student.

SCENARIO 1: Linda is bright enough, but she is shy and withdrawn. She doesn't volunteer to participate in class, and when you call on her directly, she often does not respond. When she does, she usually whispers. Today, you are checking the seatwork progress. When you question her, Linda keeps her eyes lowered and says nothing.

a.

b.

SCENARIO 2: John often seems to be off in his own world, but today he is watching you as you lead a discussion. Pleased to see him attentive, you ask him what he thinks. However, you have repeated his name and he looks startled when he realizes that you have called on him. Meanwhile, you realize that he has been immersed in daydreams and only appeared to be paying attention.

a.

b.

Appendix B

Coding System for Problem Behaviors
(All Problem Types)

A. Talk to Student(s)
   1. talk to student(s)
   2. get more information
   3. accuse/confront
   4. verbal reprimand/directive to stop/lecture
   5. discuss consequences
   6. help student solve problem
   7. talk to both students together
   8. talk to both students separately
   9. other

B. Punishment
   1. punishment
   2. by policy
   3. physical
   4. withdraw privileges
   5. send to office
   6. isolation/time out/detention
   7. demerits/slips
   8. threaten/warn
   9. grade reduction

C. Behavior Modification Techniques
   1. behavior modification
   2. general statement
   3. behavior log
   4. behavioral contract
   5. reinforce appropriate behavior
   6. ignore
   7. praise
   8. redirection
   9. other

D. Other Strategies
   1. retribution
   2. make student apologize
   3. teach social interaction skills (relating to others)
   4. moralize
   5. teach coping skills (individual)
   6. build esteem
   7. elicit behavioral expectations/rules from students
   8. investigate physical/other causes

Appendix continues

9. get information from others (classmates)
10. involve whole class
11. keep problem students occupied
12. restructure environment (rearrange room)
13. physical separation of students
14. long term physical distance
15. maintain composure of self and class
16. confer with principal
17. involve parents
18. send to counselor
19. be consistent
20. monitor closely
21. jump to conclusions/prejudge
22. embarrass/attack self-image
23. yell or scream
24. take sides
25. other

E. Strategies that will NOT work

1. accuse
2. jump to conclusions/prejudge
3. confront
4. confront in front of class
5. embarrass
6. attack self-image
7. punish in front of the class
8. physical punishment
9. punishment
10. ignore behavior
11. investigate the incident
12. withdrawing privileges
13. detention
14. yelling or screaming
15. timeout
16. send to office
17. taking sides
18. threaten/warn
19. lecture
20. praising appropriate behavior
21. academic reprisals (lower grade)
22. not being consistent
23. not involving parents
24. other

Appendix C

Most Frequently Cited Responses to Vignettes

Effective Strategies for Handling Shy Students

Talk to the student	66
Involve whole class	35
Praise student	29
Rearrange classroom	25
Monitor student closely	23

Ineffective Strategies for Handling Shy Students

Confront student in front of class	69
Embarrass student	44
Yell/scream at student	21
Punishment	16
Lecturing to the student	13

Note: n = 108. Because of multiple responses, frequencies will not equal n.